Bramante's Tempietto, the Roman Renaissance, and the Spanish Crown

Bramante's Tempietto, the Roman Renaissance, and the Spanish Crown.
Jack Freiberg.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xl + 318 pp. $115.

This book is a treasure trove of information on possible meanings of Bramante's Tempietto, from the perspective of its foundation by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain in 1502, something only unequivocally established in 1998 by the discovery of the inscription on the foundation stone's reverse. Freiberg argues that this Spanish connection is fundamental to understanding crucial aspects of the Tempietto's form and history.

The book begins, paradoxically, on the far side of Rome, at S. Croce in Gerusalemme, restored from 1488 by two Spanish cardinals, during which the rediscovery of the reputed *titulus* from the true cross is linked with the capitulation of Granada, the last Moorish toehold in Spain, both happening in 1492. Chapter 2 takes us to the church and monastery of S. Pietro in Montorio on the Janiculum, where, during the fifteenth century, the tradition that it marked the site of St. Peter's crucifixion prevailed over the more plausible rival version that the martyrdom took place in Caligula's circus, a stone's throw from St. Peter's. The next two chapters focus on the Tempietto itself, examining the sources and possible meanings of its overall form and various components. Chapter 5 explores the Spanish Crown's claims to the kingdom of Jerusalem and the Byzantine Empire for the Tempietto, while the final chapter and the epilogue look at both its *Nachleben* and the tussle between later Spanish monarchs and the popes over the patronage of the shrine, a battle won by King Alfonso XII only in 1876, following the loss of the papacy's temporal power.

Freiberg's research greatly strengthens earlier tentative suggestions for seeing the overall form of the Tempietto as alluding to both the Holy Sepulcher and to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the latter often identified as the Temple of Solomon in the period, which in turn throws light on the frequent choice of the Tempietto for altar tabernacles from the Renaissance onward to house the reserved sacrament, most notably that by Bernini in St. Peter's. Similarly, he credibly relates the adoption of the pomegranate as a Spanish royal emblem after the fall of Granada to the balustrade of the Tempietto, balusters being likened to pomegranate flowers by Renaissance architects. I might also be persuaded that the use of Tuscan order for the columns (rather than strict Doric) alludes to the belief that the Janiculum marked the edge of Etruscan territory. However, in Freiberg's eagerness to attribute meaning to every element, there is a danger of iconographical overload provoking a skeptical reaction. Given that we cannot prove what the precise program was and can only make inferences, they must be carefully chosen.

Two examples will suffice: the speculation that Bramante chose gray granite column shafts because granite was reserved for Roman imperial use, and that these examples may have specifically come from building materials stored at the Ostian harbor of Trajan because the emperor was Spanish born, is undermined a page later by the Vasari quotation that granite columns were "almost infinite in number" in Rome. They survived because they could neither be burned for lime like marble columns nor were they attractive for reuse as *pietre dure* in Cosmatesque pavements and the like. Second, the attempt to link the Tempietto's shell niches to either Saint Peter as fisherman or Saint James as patron of Spain overlooks the fact that countless saints occupy such niches on Quattrocento altarpieces. One might as well try to connect them to the forty-eight shell niches on the Janus Quadrifrons just over the Tiber. That said, I would like to propose three more possible allusions: in connection with the Forum Boarium tholos of Hercules, the analogy of the doorkeeper of Olympus with Peter's role in heaven is overlooked. Similarly, the attractive idea that the two circular mausoleums attached to Old St. Peter's inspired the Tempietto's drum could be reinforced by pointing out that S. Petronilla was Saint Peter's daughter. Lastly, Noah's Ark, on the Tempietto's altar, may echo Peter's First Epistle, where the ark is for the first time used as a type of the church.

Freiberg's book may not settle the perennial speculations on the meaning of the Tempietto, but it will become an essential springboard for future attempts.

IAN CAMPBELL, *University of Edinburgh*